

November 11, 1963

Professor Harry Levin
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Professor Levin:

I am the father of one of your students this year and would like to have your comment on what I believe are two bawdy puns of Shakespeare which have not, so far as I can determine, ever been published or commented upon. They involve the word "bunghole" in Hamlet, V:1:210, etc. and the word "bung" in Henry IV, Part II, II:4:136. I believe each is intended primarily to refer to "ass hole" and only incidentally to a barrel bung.

The use of "bunghole" results, as I see it, in a change in the meaning of lines 219, 220 following the first citation so that the "wind" means "flatus", and "clay" means "feces". Both Alexander's dust and Caesar's clay both are therefore alluded to as feces. The barrel meaning is pointless, only a justification for the pun.

The use of "filthy bung" is primarily bawdy and is warped to mean a cutpurse. I find no other use of "bung" meaning "cutpurse", only when expanded to "bung nipper", etc. "Bung" only means "pocket" when it stands alone. The word "filthy" would not be applied as an adjective if bung was to mean only cutpurse or purse.

My basis for these conclusions is the translation, in 1611, in The Dictionary of the French and English Tongues, by Randle Cotgrave, of the French word "Cul de Cheval" (Sea Anemone) as "a small ugly fish resembling a man's bung-hole". This shows "bunghole" meant "ass hole" in Shakespeare's time. "Bung" and "bunghole" are interchangeable when used in a bawdy sense.

-2-

Professor Harry Levin

November 11, 1963

All this has come about in my 15 year re-
search for the true meaning of the New England Ameri-
canism "bungtown" and thus I had to work on Shakes-
peare along the way.

Will you be nice enough to let me know if
you think I have added something or did you know this
already?

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN
atb

HARVARD UNIVERSITY • CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE • 402 BOYLSTON HALL

November 18, 1963

Mr. Eric P. Newman
Secretary
Edison Brothers Stores, Inc.
400 Washington Avenue
St. Louis 2, Missouri

Dear Mr. Newman:

With regard to the verbal point you raise in your letter of November 11th, it is one which has escaped the eye of Eric Partridge, whose Shakespeare's Bawdy is the usual compendium for significances of this kind. Nonetheless, I believe that your surmise is justified; that there is at least the possibility of a metaphorical double-entendre in the two lines you cite; and that, if it gives you any satisfaction, you may well claim it as your contribution to Shakespeare scholarship.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Harry Levin

Harry Levin
Irving Babbitt Professor of
Comparative Literature

HL:eaf

November 27, 1963

Professor Harry Levin
Harvard University
Cambridge 38, Massachusetts

Dear Professor Levin:

Thank you for your note indicating that my surmise appears to be justified as to the interpretation of "bung" and "bunghole" in Shakespeare.

I wrote to Eric Partridge and he agrees to the suggested meaning and will insert it in his next editions of "Shakespeare's Bawdy" and his various slang dictionaries.

I believe I am in line for one of the "lowest" distinctions in Shakespeare research.

Thank you for your kindness.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

Recd 11/24/64

Dear Mr. Newman,

"That firm affiance," quoth I, "had I in you before, or else I would never have gone so far over the shoes, to pluck you out of the mire. Not to make many words, (since you will needs know,) the King says flatly, you are a miser and a snudge, and he never hoped better of you." "Nay, then," quoth he, "questionless some planet that loves not cider hath conspired against me." "Moreover, which is worse, the King hath vowed to give Turwin one hot breakfast only with the bungs that he will pluck out of your barrels. I cannot stay at this time to report each circumstance that passed, but the only counsel that my long cherished kind inclination can possibly contrive, is now in your old days to be liberal: such victuals or provision as you have, presently distribute it frankly amongst poor soldiers; I would let them burst their bellies with cider and bathe in it, before I would run into my prince's ill opinion for a whole sea of it.

This is taken from Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller 1594. The episode is one of the farsicle burlesques (this one about the cider merchant) in the beginning of this "quasi-novel." I don't know if the author has the same thing in mind with his reference to your favorite word as you would predict, but I thought you might like to know this quote exists.

Andy's "Room mate"

Mike

Touff

November 25, 1964

Dear Mike,

I am ever so grateful for the excerpt from "The Unfortunate Traveler". Your contribution will be acknowledged whenever the material is published.

Now I know the origin of the expression "hot cross bungs".

Cordially,

Ch 1.- v 288

22 March 1968

Dear Mr. Newman:

When you return to St. Louis, look up

two books by the late ~~De Witt~~ T. Starnes: The English
Dictionary from Cawdrey to Johnson, 1604-1755; and

423 ST. 28

PA 2353. S7

Renaissance Dictionaries, English-Latin, and Latin-English.

These will supply names and dates of early English dictionaries.

minissmatico.

I'm sorry to miss your lecture on

Sincerely yours,
James G. McManaway

Folger, Shook. Libr "

from Dan Bartlett

BUNGSTOWN —

NICKNAME OF
COLD HARBOR SPRINGS
N.Y. —

REASON: MANY COOPER
SHOPS IN EARLY 19th
CENTURY - MANY CASKS
+ BARRELS INCLUDING
"BUNCS" = STOPPERS FOR
BARRELS -

SEE SHANNIE'S AMER NICKNAMES
H.W. WILSON + CO NY - 1937

March 27, 1968

Mr. Dan Bartlett
Bartlett, Stix & Bartlett
Attorneys at Law
408 Pine Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63102

Dear Dan:

In appreciation of your continual research with respect to the word "Bungtown", I am sending you, herewith, a copy of SHAKESPEARE'S BAWDY, which is written by my friend, Eric Partridge.

The edition which will come out in July, of this year, will include a proper understanding of the word "bung-hole", in HAMLET.

I have already located four cities which which are called "Bungtown", Cold Harbor Springs, New York, being one of them.

I will keep you advised when my monograph relating to this subject is completed.

Thank you, again, for your helpfulness.

Sincerely,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis 5, Missouri

March 29, 1968

Mr. James G. McManaway
Folger Library
201 East Capital
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. McManaway:

Thank you, very much, for your postal giving me the bibliographies containing early dictionaries. Those bibliographies will be available to me here but I presume these dictionaries themselves will not. May I call upon you to look in your early dictionaries, under the words "bung" and "bung hole" to see what any of them show.

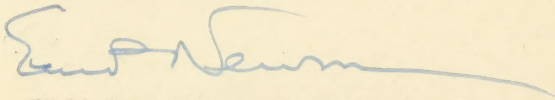
The dictionary which has given me the lead is entitled "A dictionarie of the French and English tongues", London, 1611, by Randle Cotgrave. This dictionary translates the word "Cul de cheval" as: "A small and ouglie fish, or excrescence of the Sea, resembling a man's bung-hole, and called the red Nettle (= Sea Anemone)."

There were subsequent Cotgrave editions and I would appreciate confirming whether my quotation is absolutely correct or not.

If you have the opportunity to glance in any other dictionaries, I will be most grateful to see if any of them refer to "bung" or "bung hole" as anything else but the parts of a barrel.

Many thanks for your interest.

Sincerely yours,



ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC
EDUCATION SOCIETY

EPN/atb

2 Henry IV (New Variorum),

ed. Matthias A. Shaaber

Hamlet, ed. J. Dover Wilson
(New Cambridge Sh.)

BUM (meaning bottom).

A Midsummer Night's Dream II, 1, 53

Puck

Sometimes for three-foot stool mistaketh me; 52

Then slip I from her bum, down topples she 53

Timon of Athens ~~II~~ I, ii, 240
Apermanthus

putting-out of bums

Excessive bowing

Measure for Measure II, i, ~~227~~ 221

II i, ~~228~~ 222

Pompey: Bum, sir. 221 ~~222~~

Escalus: Truth, and your bum is the greatest ~~thing~~ ²²²
thing about you 223 ~~224~~ ~~225~~

Hamlet

V:1

Prince of Denmark

155

Ham. To what base uses we may return, Horatio!
Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of
Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bung-hole? 210

Hor. 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider
so.

Ham. No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither
with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; (as
thus:) Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alex-
ander returneth to dust; the dust is earth. Of earth
we make loam, and why of that loam, whereto he
was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away. 220
O that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!

But soft! but soft awhile! Here comes the king.

*Enter King, Queen, Laertes, [a Priest,] and a Coffin,
with Lords attendant.*

The queen, the courtiers! Who is this they follow? 224
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo it own life. 'Twas of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark. 228

[Retires with Horatio.]

Laer. What ceremony else?

Ham.

That is Laertes,

A very noble youth. Mark.

211 curiously: *minutely*

214 modesty: *moderation*

222 flaw: *squall of wind*

227 Fordo it: *undo its*

228 Couch: *remain concealed*

likelihood: *probability*

223 awhile; cf. n.

estate: *rank*

As You Like It

Act III Scene 2

Written about 1600
First published 1623

Orlando: Can you remember any of the principal evils
that he laid to the charge of women?

Rosalind: There were none principal. They were all like one
another as halfpence are, every one fault seeming monstrous
till his fellow fault came to match it.

this is the very coinage of your brain:
this bodiless creation ecstasy
is very cunning in.

Hamlet Act 3 Scene 4

Shakespeare

Written ^{between} 1596 & 1599.

Henry IV : Second Part

Act II Scene 4 line 136

Doll Tearsheet, a ~~harlot~~ ~~mistress~~ whose
she is ~~is~~ vulgar mouthed in the few lines she speaks

Doll "Charge me! I scorn you, scurvy companion. What!
you poor, base, rascally, cheating, back-liner mate.
Away you mouldy rogue, away. I am
meat for your master."

Pistol I know you, Mistress Dorothy.

Doll Away, you cut-purse rascal! you filthy bung,
away! By this wine, I'll thrust my knife in your
mouldy chops and you play the saucy cuttle
with me. Away you bottle-all rascal! you
basket-belt stale puzzler, you!

The Yale Shakespeare

says "bung" ^{"is slang for"} ~~is slang for~~ "sharper"

cuttle = slang for cut purse

PE
2801
D 5
V. 3

Dialect Notes Vol III (New Haven 1913)

Word list ^{from Aroostook} submitted by Prof Horace M. Estabrooke
(1849-1908) Univ of Maine Professor

p 909 bungdown, n. A large copper coin, evidently
a corruption of bungtown.

Word list from East Alabama

p 295 bung-fodder, n. Toilet paper or a
substitute therefor.

Wash Univ
PE 3721
G 7

Francis Grose

A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue
(first edition 1785 London). Added in second edition
~~1792 (3rd) edition~~ is of 1788 the following:
BUNG UPWARDS. Said of a person lying on
his face.

listed also ~~mentioned~~ in Eric Partridge

A dictionary of Slang & Unconventional
English.
compared to 'arse upward'

Noah Webster,
An American Dictionary of the English Language (New York)
(1828)

BUNG n. 1. A stopple of the orifice in the bilge of a cask.
Mortimer

2. A hole or orifice in the bilge of a cask.

v. to stop the orifice in the bilge of a cask with a bung; to close up.

BUNG-HOLE n. 1. A hole or orifice in the bilge of a cask.

Noah Webster 1236
1848

An American Dictionary

423

N.Y. 1828

W 395

1828 edition

Ref PE 16W

Webster's New Dict

W 3

1940

Ed. 2

1941 1945

1941

1785 Francis Grose

A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue

PE 3721

G 7

1963

(1796
edition)

423

G 912

(1839
edition)

1720
edition

John Kersey

revised

The New World of Words

compiled by Edward Phillips

Harv, Yale, Univ of Chic, Univ of Ill.

B. E.

A New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and

Modern of the Crafts, Trades, (dates not known)

but about 1675-1700

Thomas Blount

Glossographia

1656 (first ed)

Folger has 1656, 1658, 1670, 1681

Wash Univ lib — Nothing on Bung or Bungle.

Nathan Bailey

Universal Etymological English Dictionary

first edit 1721

I have 1728 (1st ed)

Nothing on Bung or Bungle

John Minsheu: Ductor in
linguas, 1617

John Bullokar: English
Expositor, 1616

Giovanni Florio: A worles
of wordes (Eng. - Itaf.), 1598
—: Queen Annas New
wordes & wordes, 1611

Henry Cockram

423

C 645

1623

reprint

~~W~~otting

James G. McManaway

Folger Library

201 E. Capitol
Washington, D. C.

Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton
The Roaring Gyle or Mall Cut-Purse
(London 1611)

Part of English
Union 9 Va 2

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, Firdons Barnes,
editor (Cambridge, England 1958) Vol III, p. 86, 87

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker,
(London, 1873) Vol III, p. 217 ~~218~~

Act V Scene 1 line 173 172-3

~~Trapdoor~~
~~Trapdoor~~: Ben mort, shall you and
heave a booth, mill a ken or
nip a bung, ⁽¹⁷³⁾

line 180-2

Moll: Marry this my lord sayes hee: Ben
mort (good wench) shall you and I heave
a booth, mill a ken, or nip a bung? ⁽¹⁸¹⁾
shall you and I rob a house, or cut a
purse?

Mentioned in Oxford Dictionary

Wash Union Lib
PR 2480

OXFORD DICTIONARY

BUNG

Pick pocket

1597 Shakespeare Henry IV II, IV, ~~138~~ 138

"You cut-purse Rascall, you filthy Bung"

Bungtown is not in the Oxford English Dictn
Oxford 1933 1

Brum = ~~coin~~ a contraction of Brummagem
"counterfeit, no genuine"

Brummagem = vulgar form of Birmingham
counterfeit coin (from grates made
there in 17th cent)

counterfeit ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~same~~

Brummish = counterfeit ^(as to coin) ~~the same~~ ~~coin~~
not genuine

Samuel Johnson

A Dictionary of the English Language (London 1755)

~~Vol. I~~ #

~~Bung~~ July 1964

first edition

BUNG A stopple for a barrel

BUNG HOLE [from bung and hole] The hole at which the barrel is filled, and which is afterward stopped up.

Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bunghole.

Shakesp.

Eric Partridge

"A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English
NY 1961 (first edition 1937)

p109

Bung

4. (Also bung-hole.) the anus: low: late ^{C.} 18-20 ^{Century}

Noah Webster

Webster's Third New International

* Dictionary of the English Language
(Springfield Mass 1961)

Bung

2a the cecum or the anus esp. ^{domestic} of animals
2b also bung gut: the anus of a slaughtered
animal used as a large casing for sausage
meat

Bungtown

in [probably from Bungtown (now Barneyville)

Rehoboth, Massachusetts where it was manufactured]:

a copper token resembling an English halfpenny
that circulated in the U.S. in the 18th + 19th centuries.

Noah Webster

Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language
2nd Edition (Springfield Mass 1951)

"

bung 5. A casing for sausage meat.

"

" bungtown copper or cent [Probably from slang
bung to cheat, from bung pick-pocket] An
imitation, or counterfeit, of the English penny.

"

Oxford Diction

Cuttle. Bung = cut purse
↑ ↑
knife purse

The word bung is used to mean
purse in writings of 1567 1600
1591 1607
1592

In 1610 "Bung is now used for a
pocket, heretofore for a purse"
from Martin's Mark-all p. 37 by Fowlands
Continually used thence 1740

" Bungtown subs. (old), Birmingham.

Bungtown Coppers = money coined for
the government by private Birmingham
firms: hence counterfeit coin "

" Brummagem (3) Copper money, struck
by Boulton ^{and} Watt & then works at
Soho, Birmingham (1787) "

also George Eliot - Felix Holt, XX

" If anybody says the Radicals are a set of sneaks,
Brummagem Halfpennies, scamps who went
to play pitch-and-toss with the property of the country,

Thus is the
Oxford Dict

Bung 6.* ~~6~~ bung-hole, the hole in a cask which
is closed with the bung; transf. the anus (obs).

→ 1611 Cotgr. Cul de cheval, a small and
ouglie fish, or excrescence of the Sea, resembling
a man's bung-hole, and called the red
Nettle [= Sea Anemone]

In the Oxford Dict ~~&~~ Supplement of
1933 the word Bungtown
is listed as U.S. and the origins
in various literary items given.
on basis of American publications.

Maximilian Scheler de Vere "Americanisms: the
English of the New World" (N.Y. 1872) p. 587

"Bung-town, an imaginary town in New England, so
called from the slang term to 'bung', meaning to lie. Hence,
Bung-town Copper is a favorite name of the spurious English
half penny which has no currency in the country. "these flowers
were not fitted a Bung-town copper." (Judd, Margaret p. 19). It is said
that such a coin was really once made - a counterfeit, of course - in a
town then bearing the
name of Bung-town,
but since known
as Rehoboth
in Massachusetts."

Randle Cotgrave

his dict. ^{was} published in 1611

his French-English dictionary was published in 1611
and editions of 1632, 1650, 1660, 1673

"A dictionnaire of the French and English
tongues" (London 1611)

SPEC
PC 264a
A 2
C 7

Wash Univ 1968

Randle Catgrave

A Dictionnaire of the French and
English Tongues

1632 edition

In the French English portion

Cul de cheval. A small, and ouglie fish,
or exorescence of the Sea, resembling
a mans bung-hole, and called, the
red Nettle.

Cul: An arse, bumme, tayle,
nockandro, fundament.

Cul d'asne. as Cubaseau. the small Sea-nettle

asne = asse

Under English-French portion

Nettle. Ortie, hortie

the small stinging red nettle. Ortie
griesche, ortie grecque

A Bung: Bordon, tampon, tapon

A Bung-hole. L'orifice d'un vaisseau, le trou ou le bordon est mis.

~~Bung~~ Bungtown ~~Bung-hole~~ is not listed

This is the sea anemone

Eric Partridge

A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional
English (London 1937)

Bung

2. In cant of mid-C. 16 - early 19, a
purse. Harman, Greene, Grose. Cf.
A.-S. and Frisian. pung, a purse (Oxford
English Dictionary)

3. Hence in cant or low slang of late
C. 16-17, e.g. in Shakespeare, a cut purse.
Hence bung-knife, late C. 16, is either a
knife for purse slitting or one kept in a
purse. —

4. (Also bung-hole) the anus: low:
late C. 18-20.

Dictionary of American Slang
Harold Wentworth and Stuart B
Flexner 1967 edit supplement

bung hole (taboo) 1. The
anus, 2. To have, permit or
prefer anal intercourse.

only in supplement

Cawdry Robert 1604
reprint

PE 1620

C 35

1604 a

Wm. J. Moore

nothing

The American encyclopaedic dictionary
Chicago 1894 edited by Robert Hunter
423 Am 35

Walters

An Universal Dictionary
William Falconer (London 1771)

V 23

F 18

1771

Nothing

his Chap XV has
cant glossary.

George Parker, "Lives Painter of Variegated Characters
in Public and Private Life" (1789) p 122.
a protestation of reluctance

"I do beseech my fair readers to shun it, lest
in this primrose path, they meet a snake in
the grass"

Elisha Coles English Dictionary (1676)
first to include cant in genl dict

"Tis no Disparagement to understand the Canting
Terms: It may chance to save your Throat from
being cut, or (at least) your Pocket from
being pick'd."

Shakespeare's use of the word flaw.

flaw —

a sudden gust of wind

130. Bung) STEEVENS (Var. '78): In the cant of thievery,
to nip a bung was to cut a purse; and among an explanation of
many of these terms in Martin Mark-All's Apologie to the Bel-man
of London, 1610 (ed.Judges, The Elizabethan Underworld, 1930,
p. 407), it is said that "Bung is now used for a pocket,
heretofore for a purse." - CLARKE (ed. 1865): We think that
Doll, besides thus by inference calling Pistol a "pick-pocket,"
includes allusion to his being saturated with the fumes of the
beer-barrel. - N.E.D. (Bung sb.²): Thieves' Cant. Obs. a.A
purse. b. A pick-pocket. (This line is quoted as an example,
but in every other quotation the word means purse.) - NARES
(ed. 1888) quotes some verses from An Age for Apes (1658) in
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ which bung means pickpocket.

6/20/60

Martin Mark-all's Apologie
to the Bel-man of London
published like 1610

"Bung is now used for a pocket,
heretofore for a gurse."

Webster Dict 2nd Edit
New Intl 1945

bung -

a casing for
Sausage meat